

Federal management tool that not only costs a lot more money, but it makes it a lot, lot harder to manage your projects?

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I rise to oppose the amendment.

The amendment would eliminate the requirement that the funding provided in this bill comply with the prevailing wage requirements of the Davis-Bacon Act.

Let me remind my colleagues that the Davis-Bacon law was enacted about 75 years ago by a Republican Congress and a Republican administration.

The law sets minimum labor standards for workers employed in Federal contract construction and ensures that workers are paid at least the locally prevailing wage. There's no good reason for denying prevailing wage protection to workers involved in transportation. This is an issue of fairness for working men and women.

Without Davis-Bacon, the transportation construction industry, which is responsible for building our highways and transit systems, might suffer from low-bid firms that aim to undercut local wages and perform construction on the cheap.

Davis-Bacon encourages a higher quality of workmanship, and we should not do away with the law for transportation construction where we need the highest quality and the longest lasting workmanship.

I urge a rejection of this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Chairman, may I inquire as to the amount of time I have remaining?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Iowa has 2½ minutes remaining.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Chairman, I rise as one, again, who has worked on union shop and merit shop jobs, both as an employer and as an employee. As an employer, having been a union shop, I have paid union scale and also, of course, prevailing wage, Davis-Bacon wage scale. I've worked under a union shop, and I've worked on a merit based, and to look at the difference in the workmanship, I don't think we can apply high quality strictly to union. In fact, merit shop employees do a fantastic job with the work that they're doing, and they take pride in it, and they have to compete in the competition of the project.

My son's now in the construction business, the second generation King Construction. I know the decisions he has to make, and sometimes he will pick up a set of plans and take a look at that and figure on bidding that project and find out that it's a Davis-Bacon wage scale. He understands that

that messes up his flow of his employees, and it limits his ability to manage those employees on the job.

For example, if you're paying an excavator operator \$24 an hour and you're paying your laborer on the ground with a shovel or a grease gun let's say \$10, that man is not going to get off of that excavator and pick up that grease gun or pick up that shovel, even if it's for a half hour or an hour if he knows he's going to be paid union scale for that when he could be paid the \$24 an hour to sit on the machine. Those things work against our efficiency.

My greatest frustration with Davis-Bacon wage scale is not the wage itself. It's that it takes away my ability to manage a project and my ability to provide incentives for employees to make decisions themselves on the ground.

I have to manage them more when they're under a Davis-Bacon wage scale. I have to tell them what to do. I know people that are owners and operators of their company who get up in the morning and go out to the job at five o'clock to grease and service their machines because they can't afford to pay their operator to get out the grease gun and do it, and they'll be there at night, too, working 16 hours a day while that employee is at 8 hours a day on a Davis-Bacon wage scale.

It distorts the work we do. It distorts the skills and the complement of the skills, and it raises the cost of everything that we do in the construction business. It injects the Federal Government in the way between that relationship between an employer and employee.

Additionally, my employees have received 12 months of work, not seasonal work, health insurance benefits and vacation pay, all of that flowing because we can pay them what they're worth for a week's work as opposed to an inflated value of what they're worth for an hour's work. They make out better, we make out better, and we've got more consistent employees. That goes across this country almost universally.

So I would urge adoption of this amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from Iowa has expired.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I urge rejection of this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Iowa will be postponed.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. CONAWAY

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the Clerk will report the amendment.

There was no objection.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. CONAWAY:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. _____. It is the sense of the House of Representatives that any reduction in the amount appropriated by this Act achieved as a result of amendments adopted by the House should be dedicated to deficit reduction.

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Chairman, I reserve a point of order.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Massachusetts reserves a point of order.

Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Chairman, I take this opportunity tonight to point out one more time one of the quirks of the rules that we operate under.

We have heard over the last 2 days many of my colleagues come to these microphones and propose reductions in spending in this particular area of the Federal budget, very eloquent, very passionate, to try to reduce this spending.

But the harsh reality is, should any of those amendments have passed or should any of the ones that we're about to vote on pass, the reality is that that spending does not, in fact, get cut out of this budget. This spending would simply be spent in conference and would not reduce the deficit or, should we ever get to that point, increase the surplus.

So my amendment would simply state the sense that instead of continuing the practice, the age-old practice of spending whatever is in 302(b) allocation, whether it's warranted or not, we would actually take an opportunity to reduce spending which I think folks on both sides of the aisle, many people on both sides of the aisle would say is arguably one of the things that we ought to be doing and studying.

This is not a revolutionary position to take, but it's one in which I think it makes sense. Most folks in Texas in District 11 would clearly understand the intent of what I'm trying to do. In fact, it would come as a shock to them to know that if we found 218 votes to adopt the 1 percent cut or the half a percent cut or the 25-basis point cut, that all of that hard work would be for naught and that that money would still get spent.

So I understand there's a point of order that lies against this. I will not push for a ruling from the Chair. I just wanted to simply take the opportunity tonight to point out to my colleagues that we need to change the rules. We need to change the way we operate in this House, and this would be one of those that we ought to seriously consider doing so that the will of the House could operate to actually change spending if that were, in fact, the case.